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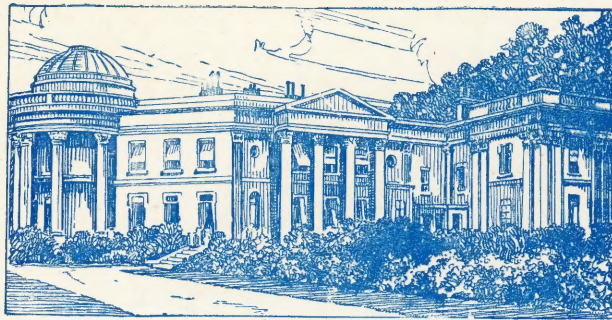
The  
**OUTLINE of HISTORY**  
BY  
**H. G. WELLS.**



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SECOND CENTURY PORTRAIT OF CHRIST FROM THE ROMAN CATACOMBS.

Drawing by T. Heaphy, in the British Museum.



BOOK VI<sup>1</sup>

## CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

## XXX

## THE BEGINNINGS, THE RISE, AND THE DIVISIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

## § I

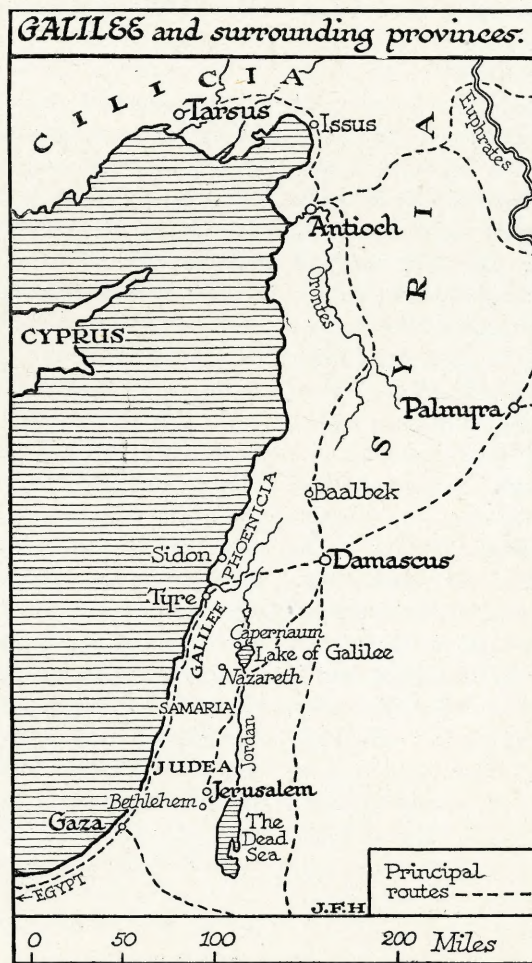
**B**EFORE we can understand the qualities of Christianity, which must now play a large part in our history, and which opened men's eyes to fresh aspects of the possibility of a unified

Judea at the world, we must go back some centuries and tell of the condition of affairs in Palestine and Syria, in which countries Christianity arose. We have already told in Chapter XXI the main facts about the origin of the Jewish nation and tradition, about the Diaspora, about the fundamentally scattered nature of Jewry even from the beginning, and the gradual development of the idea of one just God ruling the earth and bound by a special promise to preserve and bring to honour

<sup>1</sup> The student desirous of developing this and the following book cannot do better than proceed to the *Cambridge Medieval History*.

the Jewish people. The Jewish idea was and is a curious combination of theological breadth and an intense racial patriotism. The Jews looked for a special saviour, a Messiah, who was to redeem mankind by the agreeable process of restoring the

fabulous glories of David and Solomon, and bringing the whole world at last under the benevolent but firm Jewish heel. As the political power of the Semitic peoples declined, as Carthage followed Tyre into the darkness and Spain became a Roman province, this dream grew and spread. There can be little doubt that the scattered Phoenicians in Spain and Africa and throughout the Mediterranean, speaking as they did a language closely akin to Hebrew and being deprived of their authentic political rights, became proselytes to Judaism. For phases of vigorous proselytism alternated with phases of exclusive jealousy in Jewish





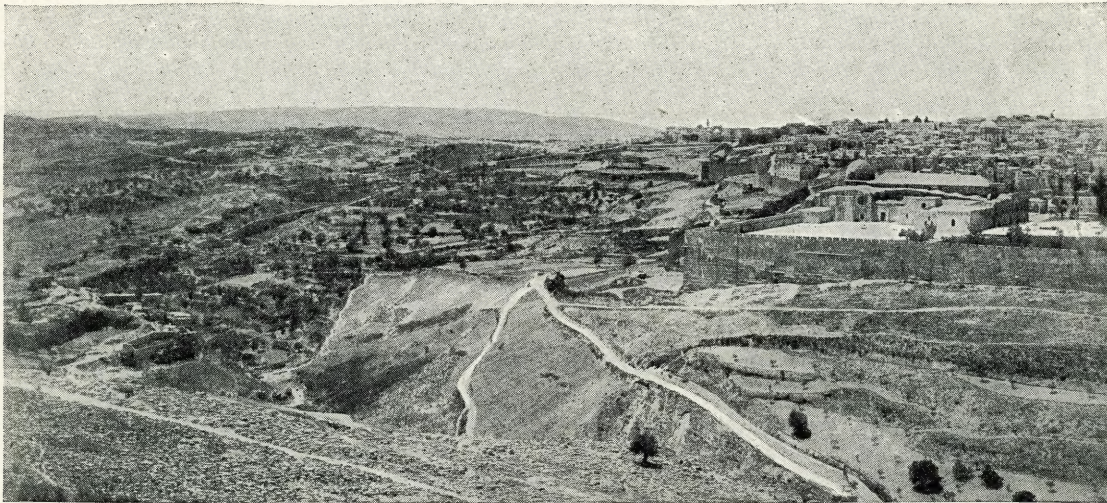


Photo: H. J. Shepstone.

JERUSALEM.

history. On one occasion the Idumeans, being conquered, were all forcibly made Jews.<sup>1</sup> There were Arab tribes who were Jews in the time of Mohammed, and a Turkish people who were mainly Jews in South Russia in the ninth century. Judaism is indeed the reconstructed political ideal of many shattered peoples—mainly Semitic. It is to the Phoenician contingent and to Aramean accessions in Babylon that the financial and commercial tradition of the Jews is to be ascribed. But as a result of these coalescences and assimilations, almost everywhere in the towns throughout the Roman Empire, and far beyond it in the east, Jewish communities traded and flourished, and were kept in touch through the Bible and through a religious and educational organization. The main part of Jewry never was in Judea and had never come out of Judea.

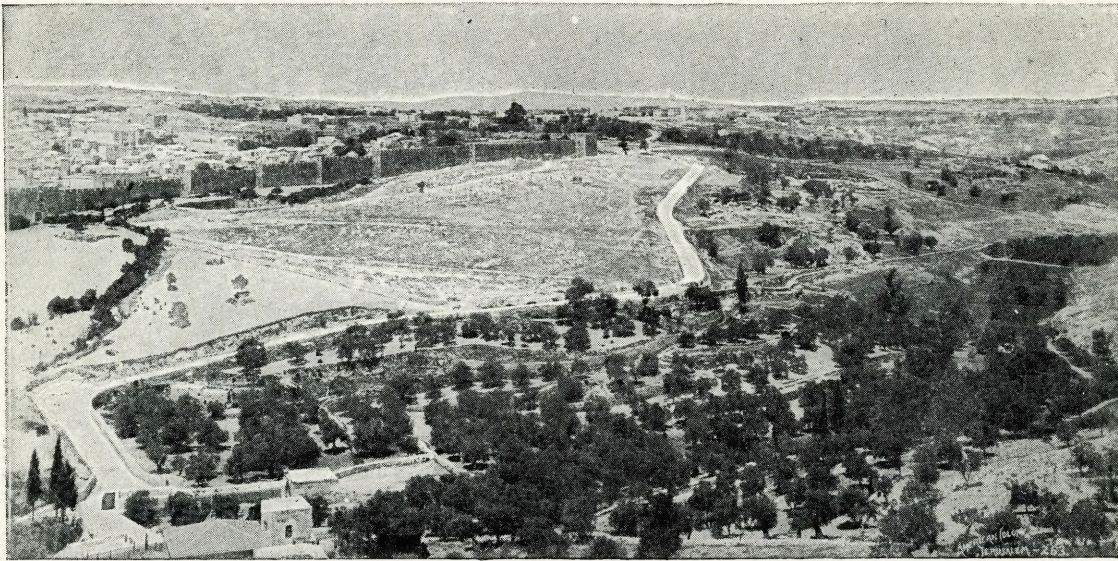
Manifestly this intercommunicating series of Judaized communities had very great financial and political facilities. They could assemble resources, they could stir up, they could allay. They were neither so abundant nor so civilized as the still more widely diffused Greeks, but they had a tradition of greater solidarity. Greek was hostile to Greek; Jew stood by Jew. Wherever a Jew went, he found men of like mind and like tradition with himself. He could get shelter, food, loans, and legal help. And by reason of this solidarity rulers had everywhere to take account of this people as a help, as a

source of loans or as a source of trouble. So it is that the Jews have persisted as a people while Hellenism has become a universal light for mankind.

We cannot tell here in any detail the history of that smaller part of Jewry that lived in Judea. These Jews had returned to their old position of danger; again they were seeking peace in, so to speak, the middle of a highway. In the old time they had been between Syria and Assyria to the north and Egypt to the south; now they had the Seleucids to the north and the Ptolemys to the south, and when the Seleucids went, then down came the Roman power upon them. The independence of Judea was always a qualified and precarious thing. The reader must go to the *Antiquities* and the *Wars of the Jews* of Flavius Josephus, a copious, tedious, and maddeningly patriotic writer, to learn of the succession of their rulers, of their high-priest monarchs, and of the Maccabæans, the Herods and the like. These rulers were for the most part of the ordinary eastern type, cunning, treacherous, and blood-stained. Thrice Jerusalem was taken and twice the temple was destroyed. It was the support of the far more powerful Diaspora that prevented the little country from being wiped out altogether, until 70 A.D., when Titus, the adopted son and successor of the Emperor Vespasian, after a siege that ranks in bitterness and horror with that of Tyre and Carthage, took Jerusalem and destroyed city and temple altogether. He did

<sup>1</sup> Josephus.





*Photo : American Colony, Jerusalem.*

#### JERUSALEM.

this in an attempt to destroy Jewry, but indeed he made Jewry stronger by destroying its one sensitive and vulnerable point.

Throughout a history of five centuries of war and civil commotion between the return from captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem, certain constant features of the Jew persisted. He remained obstinately monotheistic; he would have none other gods but the one true God. In Rome, as in Jerusalem, he stood out manfully against the worship of any god-Cæsar. And to the best of his ability he held to his covenants with his God. No graven images could enter Jerusalem; even the Roman standards with their eagles had to stay outside.

Two divergent lines of thought are traceable in Jewish affairs during these five hundred years. On the right, so to speak, are the high and narrow Jews, the Pharisees, very orthodox, very punctilious upon even the minutest details of the law, intensely patriotic and exclusive. Jerusalem on one occasion fell to the Seleucid monarch Antiochus IV. because the Jews would not defend it on the Sabbath day, when it is forbidden to work; and it was because the Jews made no effort to destroy his siege train on the Sabbath that Pompey the Great was able to take Jerusalem. But against these narrow Jews were pitted the broad Jews, the Jews of the left, who were Hellenizers, among whom are to be ranked the Sadducees, who did

not believe in immortality. These latter Jews, the broad Jews, were all more or less disposed to mingle with and assimilate themselves to the Greeks and Hellenized peoples about them. They were ready to accept proselytes, and so to share God and his promise with all mankind. But what they gained in generosity they lost in rectitude. They were the worldlings of Judea. We have already noted how the Hellenized Jews of Egypt lost their Hebrew, and had to have their Bible translated into Greek.

In the reign of Tiberius Cæsar a great teacher arose out of Judea who was to liberate the intense realization of the righteousness and unchallengeable oneness of God and of man's moral obligation to God, which was the strength of orthodox Judaism, from that greedy and exclusive narrowness with which it was so extraordinarily intermingled in the Jewish mind. This was Jesus of Nazareth, the seed rather than the founder of Christianity.

#### § 2

The audience to which this book will first be presented will be largely an audience of Christians, with perhaps a sprinkling of Jewish readers, and the former at least will regard Jesus of Nazareth as being much more than a human teacher, and

The Teach-  
ing of Jesus  
of Nazareth.



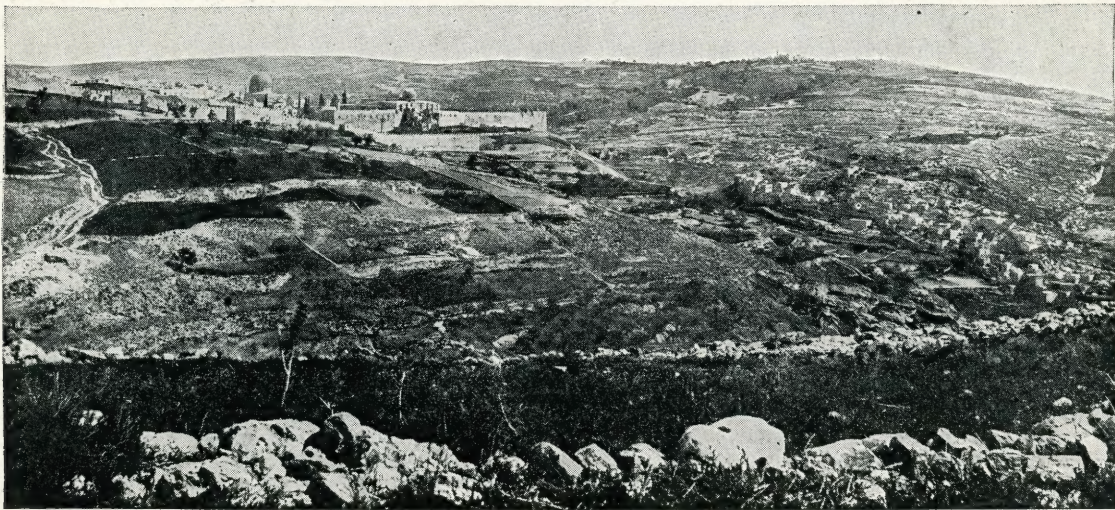


Photo: H. J. Shepstone.

JERUSALEM, SHOWING SILOAM AND MOUNT OF OLIVES.

his appearance in the world not as a natural event in history, but as something of a supernatural sort interrupting and changing that steady development of life towards a common consciousness and a common will, which we have hitherto been tracing in this book. But these persuasions, dominant as they are in Europe and America, are nevertheless not the persuasions of all men or of the great majority of mankind, and we are writing this outline of the story of life with as complete an avoidance of controversial matter as may be. We are trying to write as if this book was to be read as much by Hindus or Moslems or Buddhists as by Americans and Western Europeans. We shall therefore hold closely to the apparent facts, and avoid, without any disputation or denial, the theological interpretations that have been imposed upon them. We shall tell what men have believed about Jesus of Nazareth, but him we shall treat as being what he appeared to be, a man, just as a painter must needs paint him as a man. The documents that testify to his acts and teachings we shall treat as ordinary human documents. If the light of divinity shine through our recital, we will neither help nor hinder it. This is what we have already done in the case of Buddha, and what we shall do later with Mohammed. About Jesus we have to write not theology but history, and our concern is not with the spiritual and theological significance of his life, but with its effects upon the political and everyday life of men.

Almost our only sources of information about the personality of Jesus are derived from the four gospels, all of which were certainly in existence a few decades after his death. The first three, the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, many suppose to be derived from some earlier documents; the gospel of St. John has more idiosyncrasy and is coloured by theology of a strongly Hellenic type. Critics are disposed to regard the gospel of St. Mark as being the most trustworthy account of the personality and actual words of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> But all four agree in giving us a picture of a very definite personality; they carry the same conviction of reality that the early accounts of Buddha do. In spite of miraculous and incredible additions, one is obliged to say, "Here was a man. This part of the tale could not have been invented."

But just as the personality of Gautama Buddha has been distorted and obscured by the stiff squatting figure, the gilded idol of later Buddhism, so one feels that the lean and strenuous personality of Jesus is much wronged by the unreality and conventionality that a mistaken reverence had imposed upon his figure in modern Christian art. Jesus was a penniless teacher, who wandered about the dusty, sun-bit country of Judea, living upon casual gifts of food; yet he is always represented clean, combed, and sleek, in spotless raiment, erect, and with something motionless about him as

<sup>1</sup> See *Encyclopædia Biblica*; article "Jesus."



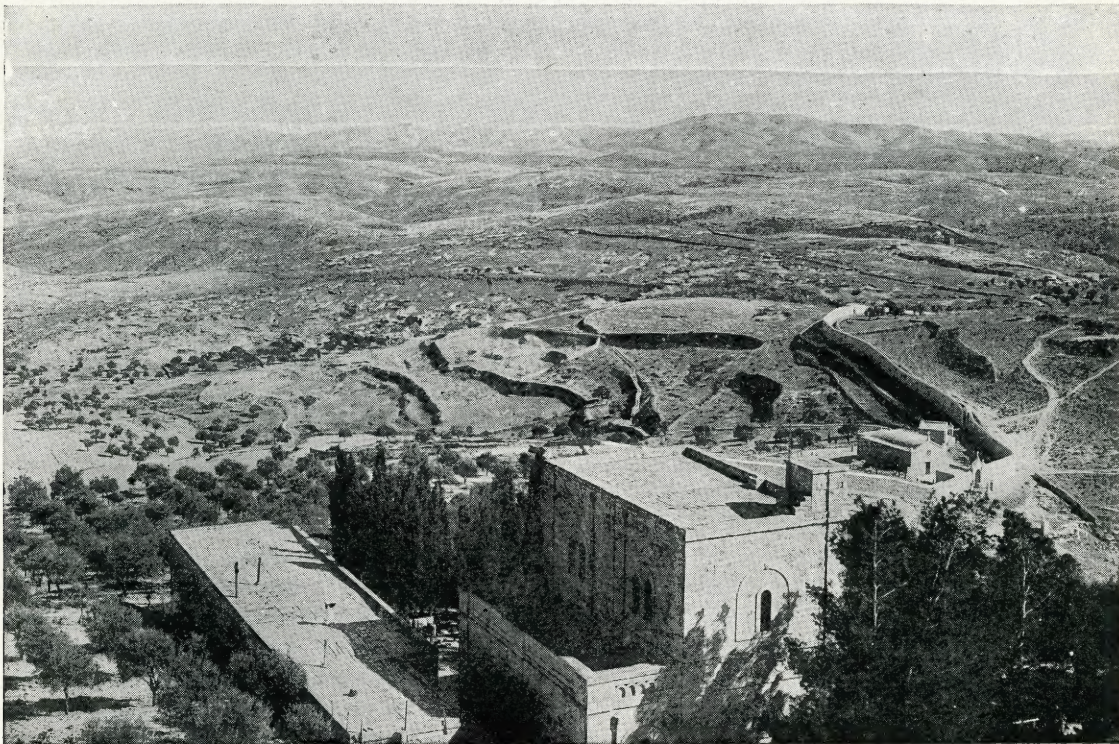
though he was gliding through the air. This alone has made him unreal and incredible to many people who cannot distinguish the core of the story from the ornamental and unwise additions of the unintelligently devout.

And it may be that the early parts of the gospels are accretions of the same nature. The miraculous circumstances of the birth of Jesus, the great star that brought wise men from the east to worship at his manger cradle, the massacre of all the infant children in Judea by Herod—a massacre of which there is no single scrap of evidence in any contemporary history—and the flight into Egypt, are all supposed to be such accretionary matter by many authorities. At the best they are events unnecessary to the teaching, and they rob it of much of the strength and power it possesses when we strip it of such accompaniment. So, too, do the discrepant genealogies given by Matthew and Luke, in which there is an endeavour to trace the direct descent of Joseph, his father, from King David, as though it was any honour to Jesus or to anyone to have such

a man as an ancestor. The insertion of these genealogies is the more peculiar and unreasonable, because, according to the legend, Jesus was not the son of Joseph at all, but miraculously conceived.

We are left, if we do strip this record of these difficult accessories, with the figure of a being, very human, very earnest and passionate, capable of swift anger, and teaching a new and simple and profound doctrine—namely, the universal loving Fatherhood of God and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. He was clearly a person—to use a common phrase—of intense personal magnetism. He attracted followers and filled them with love and courage. Weak and ailing people were heartened and healed by his presence. Yet he was probably of a delicate physique, because of the swiftness with which he died under the pains of crucifixion. There is a tradition that he fainted when, according to the custom, he was made to bear his cross to the place of execution.<sup>1</sup> When

<sup>1</sup> John says he carried his cross, but the three other gospels say that it was carried for him.



*Photo: American Colony, Jerusalem.*

A VIEW FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, LOOKING ACROSS THE WILDERNESS OF JUDEA AND THE DEAD SEA AND JORDAN VALLEY. MOUNTAINS OF MOAB IN THE DISTANCE.



he first appeared as a teacher he was a man of about thirty. He went about the country for three years spreading his doctrine, and then he came to Jerusalem and was accused of trying to set up a strange kingdom in Judea; he was tried upon this charge, and crucified together with two thieves. Long before they were dead, his sufferings were over.

Now it is a matter of fact that in the gospels all that body of theological assertion which constitutes Christianity finds

little support. There is, as the reader may see for himself, no clear and emphatic assertion in these books of the doctrines which Christian teachers of all denominations find generally necessary to salvation. It is difficult to get any words that actually came from Jesus in which he claimed to be the Jewish Messiah (rendered in Greek by "the Christ") or to be a part of the godhead, or in which he explained the doctrine of the Atonement or urged any sacrifices or sacraments (that is to say, priestly offices) upon his followers. We shall see presently how later on all Christendom was torn by disputes about the Trinity. There is no evidence that the apostles of Jesus ever heard of the Trinity—at any rate from him. The observance of the Jewish Sabbath, again, transferred to the Mithraic Sun-day, is an important feature of many Christian cults; but Jesus deliberately broke the Sabbath, and said that it was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Nor did he say a word about the worship of his mother Mary, in the guise of Isis, the Queen of



*Photo: Underwood & Underwood.*

THE "SUN-BIT COUNTRY OF JUDEA."

Heaven. All that is most characteristically Christian in worship and usage, he ignored. Sceptical writers have had the temerity to deny that Jesus can be called a Christian at all. For light upon these extraordinary gaps in his teaching, each reader must go to his own religious guides. Here we are bound to mention these gaps on account of the difficulties and controversies that arose out of them, and we are equally bound not to enlarge upon them.

As remarkable

is the enormous prominence given by Jesus to the teaching of what he called the Kingdom of Heaven, and its comparative insignificance in the procedure and teaching of most of the Christian churches.

This doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, and which plays so small a part in the Christian creeds, is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought. It is small wonder if the world of that time failed to grasp its full significance, and recoiled in dismay from even a half apprehension of its tremendous challenges to the established habits and institutions of mankind. It is small wonder if the hesitating convert and disciple presently went back to the old familiar ideas of temple and altar, of fierce deity and propitiatory observance, of consecrated priest and magic blessing, and—these things being attended to—reverted then to the dear old habitual life of hates and profits and competition and pride. For the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Jesus



seems to have preached it, was no less than a bold and uncompromising demand for a complete change and cleansing of the life of our struggling race, an utter cleansing, without and within. To the gospels the reader must go for all that is preserved of this tremendous teaching; here we are only concerned with the jar of its impact upon established ideas.

The Jews were persuaded that God, the one God of the whole world, was a righteous god, but they also thought of him as a trading god who had made a bargain with their Father

creeds and other races. In the parable of the labourers he thrust aside the obstinate claim of the Jews to have a sort of first mortgage upon God. All whom God takes into the kingdom, he taught, God serves alike; there is no distinction in his treatment, because there is no measure to his bounty. From all, moreover, as the parable of the buried talent witnesses, and as the incident of the widow's mite enforces, he demands the utmost. There are no privileges, no rebates, and no excuses in the Kingdom of Heaven.



Photo: American Colony, Jerusalem.

THE LOWER POOL OF GHION, JERUSALEM.

Abraham about them, a very good bargain indeed for them, to bring them at last to predominance in the earth. With dismay and anger they heard Jesus sweeping away their dear securities. God, he taught, was no bargainer; there were no chosen people and no favourites in the Kingdom of Heaven. God was the loving father of all life, as incapable of showing favour as the universal sun. And all men were brothers—sinners alike and beloved sons alike—of this divine father. In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus cast scorn upon that natural tendency we all obey, to glorify our own people and to minimise the righteousness of other

But it was not only the intense tribal patriotism of the Jews that Jesus outraged. They were a people of intense family loyalty, and he would have swept away all the narrow and restrictive family affections in the great flood of the love of God. The whole Kingdom of Heaven was to be the family of his followers. We are told that, "While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who



are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."<sup>1</sup>

And not only did Jesus strike at patriotism and the bonds of family loyalty in the name of God's universal fatherhood and the brotherhood of all mankind, but it is clear that his teaching condemned all the gradations of the economic system, all private wealth, and personal advantages. All men belonged to the kingdom; all their possessions belonged to the kingdom;

him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

"And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in



*Photo: American Colony, Jerusalem.*

TIBERIAS AND THE LAKE OF GALILEE.

the righteous life for all men, the only righteous life, was the service of God's will with all that we had, with all that we were. Again and again he denounced private riches and the reservation of any private life.

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these things have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 46-50.

riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, in his tremendous prophecy of this kingdom which was to make all men one together in God, Jesus had small patience for the bargaining righteousness of formal religion. Another large part of his recorded utterances is aimed against the meticulous observance of the rules of the pious career. "Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands

<sup>2</sup> Mark x. 17-25.



oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written,

“This people honoureth me with their lips,

“But their heart is far from me.

“Howbeit in vain do they worship me,

“Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

“For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.”<sup>1</sup>

So, too, we may note a score of places in which he flouted that darling virtue of the formalist, the observance of the Sabbath.

It was not merely a moral and a social revolution that Jesus proclaimed; it is clear from a score of indications that his teaching had a political bent of the plainest sort. It is true that he said his kingdom was not of this world, that it was in the hearts of men and not upon a throne; but it is equally clear that wherever and in what measure his kingdom was set up in the hearts of men, the outer world would be in that measure revolutionized and made new.

Whatever else the deafness and blindness of his hearers may have missed in his utterances, it is plain that they did not miss his resolve to revolutionize the world. Some of the questions that were brought to Jesus and the answers he gave enable us to guess at the drift of much of his unrecorded teaching. The directness of his political attack is manifest by such an incident as that of the coin—

“And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest

not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar’s. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and to God the things that are God’s”<sup>2</sup>—which, in view of all else that he had taught, left very little of a man or his possessions for Cæsar.

The whole tenor of the opposition to him and the circumstances of his trial and execution show clearly that to his contemporaries he seemed to propose plainly, and did propose plainly to change and fuse and enlarge all human life. But even his disciples did not grasp the profound and comprehensive significance of that proposal. They were ridden by the old Jewish dream of a king, a Messiah to overthrow the Hellenized Herods and the Roman overlord, and restore the fabled glories of David. They disregarded the substance of his teaching, plain and direct though it was; evidently they thought it was merely his mysterious and singular way of setting about the adventure that would at last put him on the throne of Jerusalem. They thought he was just another king among the endless succession of kings, but of a quasi-magic kind, and making quasi-magic professions of an impossible virtue.

“And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give;

<sup>1</sup> Mark vii. 1-9.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xii. 13-17.



but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."<sup>1</sup>

This was cold comfort for those who looked for a due reward for their services and hardships in his train. They could not believe this hard doctrine of a kingdom of service which was its own exceeding great reward. Even when he was dead upon the cross, they could not believe that he was not still in the vein of the ancient world of pomps and privileges, that presently by some amazing miracle he would become undead again and return, and set up his throne with much splendour and graciousness in Jerusalem. They thought his life was a stratagem and his death a trick.

He was too great for his disciples. And in view of what he plainly said, is it any wonder that all who were rich and prosperous felt a horror of strange things, a swimming of their world at his teaching? Perhaps the priests and the rulers and the rich men understood him better than his followers. He was dragging out all the little private reservations they had made from social service into the light of a universal religious life. He was like some terrible moral huntsman digging mankind out of the snug burrows in which they had lived hitherto. In the white blaze of this kingdom of his there was to be no property, no privilege, no pride and precedence; no motive indeed and no reward but love. Is it any wonder that men were dazzled and blinded and cried out against him? Even his disciples cried out when he would not spare them the light. Is it any wonder that the priests realized that between this man and themselves there was no choice but that he or priestcraft should perish? Is it any wonder that the Roman soldiers, con-

fronted and amazed by something soaring over their comprehension and threatening all their disciplines, should take refuge in wild laughter, and crown him with thorns and robe him in purple and make a mock Cæsar of him? For to take him seriously was to enter upon a strange and alarming life, to abandon habits, to control instincts and impulses, to essay an incredible happiness. . . .

Is it any wonder that to this day this Galilean is too much for our small hearts?

### § 3

Yet be it noted that while there was much in the real teachings of Jesus that a rich man or a priest or a trader or an imperial official or any ordinary respectable citizen could not accept without the most revolutionary changes in his way of living, yet there was nothing that a follower of the actual teaching of Gautama Sakya might not receive very readily, nothing to prevent a primitive Buddhist from being also a Nazarene, and nothing to prevent a personal disciple of Jesus from accepting all the recorded teachings of Gautama Buddha.

Again consider the tone of this extract from the writings of a Chinaman, Mo Ti, who lived somewhen in the fourth century B.C., when the doctrines of Confucius and Lao Tse prevailed in China, before the advent of Buddhism to that country, and note how "Nazarene" it is.

"The mutual attacks of state on state; the mutual usurpations of family on family; the mutual robberies of man on man; the want of kindness on the part of the sovereign and of loyalty on the part of the minister; the want of tenderness and filial duty between father and son—these, and such as these, are the things injurious to the empire. All this has arisen from want of mutual love. If but that one virtue could be made universal, the princes loving one another would have no battle-fields; the chiefs of families would attempt no usurpations; men would commit no robberies; rulers and ministers would be gracious and loyal; fathers and sons would be kind and filial; brothers would be harmonious and easily reconciled. Men in general loving one another, the strong would not make prey of the weak; the many would not plunder the few, the rich

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 35-45.





Photo: H. J. Shepstone.

RUINS OF A LARGE JEWISH SYNAGOGUE AT CAPERNAUM ON THE SHORES OF THE LAKE OF GALILEE

would not insult the poor, the noble would not be insolent to the mean; and the deceitful would not impose upon the simple.”<sup>1</sup>

This is extraordinarily like the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth cast into political terms. The thoughts of Mo Ti came close to the Kingdom of Heaven.

This essential identity is the most important historical aspect of these great world religions. They were in their beginnings quite unlike the priest, altar and temple cults, those cults for the worship of definite finite gods that played so great and so essential a part in the earlier stages of man's development between 15,000 B.C. and 600 B.C. These new world religions, from 600 B.C. onward, were essentially religions of the heart and of the universal sky. They swept away all those various and limited gods that had served the turn of human needs since the first communities were welded together by fear and hope. And presently when we come to Islam we shall find that for a third time the same fundamental new doctrine of the need of a universal devotion of all men to one Will reappears. Islam indeed is marred, as Judaism

<sup>1</sup> Hirth, *The Ancient History of China*. Chap. viii.

is marred, by a streak of primitive exclusiveness; its founder was manifestly of a commoner clay than either Jesus or Gautama, and he had to tack on to his assertion of the supremacy of God an assertion that Mohammed was in especial his prophet, a queer little lapse into proprietorship, a touchingly baseless claim for the copyright of an idea which, as a matter of fact, he had picked up from the Jews and Christians about him. Yet, warned by the experiences of Christianity, Mohammed was very emphatic in insisting that he himself was merely a man. And the broad idea of human brotherhood under God that he preached, and the spirit in which his followers have carried it among black and fallen races, puts his essential teaching little lower than that of its two greater but far more abundantly corrupted and misrepresented rivals.

We speak of these great religions of mankind which arose between the Persian conquest of Babylon and the break-up of the Roman empires as rivals; but it is their defects, their accumulations and excrescences, their differences of language and phrase, that cause the rivalry; and it is not to one overcoming the other or to



any new variant replacing them that we must look, but to the white truth in each being burnt free from its dross, and becoming manifestly the same truth—namely, that the hearts of men, and therewith all the lives and institutions of men, must be subdued to one common Will, ruling them all.<sup>1</sup>

And though much has been written foolishly about the antagonism of science and religion, there is indeed no such antagonism. What all these world religions declare by inspiration and insight, history as it grows clearer and science as its range extends display, as a reasonable and demonstrable fact, that men form one universal brotherhood, that they spring from one common origin, that their individual lives, their nations and races, interbreed and blend and go on to merge again at last in one common human destiny upon this little planet amidst the stars. And the psychologist can now stand beside the preacher and assure us that there is no reasoned peace of heart, no balance and no safety in the soul, until a man in losing his life has found it, and has schooled and disciplined his interests and will beyond greeds, rivalries, fears, instincts, and narrow affections. The history of our race and personal religious experience run so closely parallel as to seem to a modern observer almost the same thing; both tell of a being at first scattered and blind and utterly confused, feeling its way slowly to the serenity and salvation of an ordered and coherent purpose. That, in the simplest, is the outline of history; whether one have a religious purpose or disavow a religious purpose altogether, the lines of the outline remain the same.

#### § 4

In the year 30 A.D.,<sup>2</sup> while Tiberius, the second Emperor, was Emperor of Rome and Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judea, a little while before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus of Nazareth came into Jerusalem. Probably he

The Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.

came then for the first time. Hitherto he had been preaching chiefly in Galilee, and for the most part round and about the town of Capernaum. In Capernaum he had preached in the synagogue.

His entry into Jerusalem was a pacific triumph. He had gathered a great following in Galilee—he had sometimes to preach from a boat upon the Lake of Galilee, because of the pressure of the crowd upon the shore—and his fame had spread before him to the capital. Great crowds came out to greet him. It is clear they did not understand the drift of his teaching, and that they shared the general persuasion that by some magic of righteousness he was going to overthrow the established order. He rode into the city upon the foal of an ass that had been borrowed by his disciples. The crowd accompanied him with cries of triumph and shouts of "Hosanna," a word of rejoicing.

He went to the temple. Its outer courts were cumbered with the tables of money-changers and with the stalls of those who sold doves to be liberated by pious visitors to the temple. These traders upon religion he and his followers cast out, overturning the tables. It was almost his only act of positive rule.

Then for a week he taught in Jerusalem, surrounded by a crowd of followers who made his arrest by the authorities difficult. Then officialdom gathered itself together against this astonishing intruder. One of his disciples, Judas, dismayed and disappointed at the apparent ineffectiveness of this capture of Jerusalem, went to the Jewish priests to give them his advice and help in the arrest of Jesus. For this service he was rewarded with thirty pieces of silver. The high priest and the Jews generally had many reasons for dismay at this gentle insurrection that was filling the streets with excited crowds; for example, the Romans might misunderstand it or use it as an occasion to do some mischief to the whole Jewish people. Accordingly the high priest Caiaphas, in his anxiety to show his loyalty to the Roman overlord, was the leader in the proceedings against this unarmed Messiah, and the priests and the orthodox mob of Jerusalem the chief accusers of Jesus.

How he was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, how he was tried and sentenced by

<sup>1</sup> "St. Paul understood what most Christians never realize, namely, that the Gospel of Christ is not a religion, but religion itself in its most universal and deepest significance."—Dean Inge in *Outspoken Essays*.

<sup>2</sup> Authorities vary considerably upon this date, and upon most of the dates of the life of Jesus. See *Encyclopædia Biblica*, art. "Chronology."



Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator, how he was scourged and mocked by the Roman soldiers and crucified upon the hill called Golgotha, is told with unsurpassable simplicity and dignity in the gospels.

The revolution collapsed utterly. The disciples of Jesus with one accord deserted him, and Peter, being taxed as one of them, said, "I know not the man." This was not the end they had anticipated in their great coming to Jerusalem. His last hours of aching pain and thirst upon the cross were watched only by a few women and near friends.

of nature indulged in any such meaningless comments. Far more tremendous is it to suppose a world apparently indifferent to those three crosses in the red evening twilight, and to the little group of perplexed and desolated watchers. The darkness closed upon the hill; the distant city set about its preparations for the Passover; scarcely anyone but that knot of mourners on the way to their homes troubled whether Jesus of Nazareth was still dying or already dead. . . .

The souls of the disciples were plunged for a time into utter darkness. Then presently came



*Photo: American Colony, Jerusalem.*

ANTIOCH, NORTHERN SYRIA.

Towards the end of the long day of suffering this abandoned leader roused himself to one supreme effort, cried out with a loud voice, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" and, leaving these words to echo down the ages, a perpetual riddle to the faithful, died.

It was inevitable that simple believers should have tried to enhance the stark terrors of this tragedy by foolish stories of physical disturbances similar to those which had been invented to emphasize the conversion of Gautama. We are told that a great darkness fell upon the earth, and that the veil of the temple was rent in twain; but if indeed these things occurred, they produced not the slightest effect upon the minds of people in Jerusalem at that time. It is difficult to believe nowadays that the order

a whisper among them and stories, rather discrepant stories, that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb in which it had been placed, and that first one and then another had seen him alive. Soon they were consoling themselves with the conviction that he had risen from the dead, that he had shown himself to many, and had ascended visibly into heaven. Witnesses were found to declare that they had positively seen him go up, visibly in his body. He had gone through the blue—to God. Soon they had convinced themselves that he would presently come again, in power and glory, to judge all mankind. In a little while, they said, he would come back to them; and in these bright revivals of their old-time dream of an assertive and temporal splendour they



forgot the greater measure, the giant measure he had given them of the Kingdom of God.

### § 5<sup>1</sup>

The story of the early beginnings of Christianity is the story of the struggle between the real teachings and spirit of Jesus of Nazareth and the limitations, amplifications, and misunderstandings of the very inferior men who had loved and followed him from Galilee, and who were now the bearers and custodians of his message to mankind. The gospels and the Acts of the Apostles present a patched and uneven record, but there can be little question that on the whole it is a quite honest record of those early days.

The early Nazarenes, as the followers of Jesus were called, present from the first a spectacle of a great confusion between these two strands, his teaching on the one hand, and the glosses and interpretations of the disciples on the other. They continued for a time his disciplines of the complete subjugation of self; they had their goods in common, they had no bond but love. Nevertheless, they built their faith upon the stories that were told of his resurrection and magical ascension, and the promised return. Few of them understood that the renunciation of self is its own reward, that it is itself the Kingdom of Heaven; they regarded it as a sacrifice that entitled them to the compensation of power and dominion when presently the second coming occurred. They had now all identified Jesus with the promised Christ, the Messiah so long expected by the Jewish people. They found out prophecies of the crucifixion in the prophets—the Gospel of Matthew is particularly insistent upon these prophecies. Revived by these hopes, enforced by the sweet and pure lives of many of the believers, the Nazarene doctrine began to spread very rapidly in Judea and Syria.

And presently there arose a second great teacher, whom many modern authorities regard as the real founder of Christianity, Saul of

Tarsus, or Paul. Saul apparently was his Jewish and Paul his Roman name; he was a Roman citizen, and a man of much wider education and a much narrower intellectuality than Jesus seems to have been. By birth he was probably a Jew, though some Jewish writers deny this; he had certainly studied under Jewish teachers. But he was well versed in the Hellenic theologies of Alexandria, and his language was Greek. Some classical scholars profess to find his Greek unsatisfactory; he did not use the Greek of Athens, but the Greek of Alexandria; but he used it with power and freedom.<sup>2</sup> He was a religious theorist and teacher long before he heard of Jesus of Nazareth, and he appears in the New Testament narrative at first as the bitter critic and antagonist of the Nazarenes.

The present writer has been unable to find any discussion of the religious ideas of Paul before he became a follower of Jesus. They must have been a basis, if only a basis of departure, for his new views, and their phraseology certainly supplied the colour of his new doctrines. We are almost equally in the dark as to the teachings of Gamaliel, who is named as the Jewish teacher at whose feet he sat. Nor do we know what Gentile teachings had reached him. It is highly probable that he had been influenced by Mithraism. He uses phrases curiously like Mithraistic phrases. What will be clear to anyone who reads his various Epistles, side by side with the Gospels, is that his mind was saturated by an idea which does not appear at all prominently in the reported sayings and teaching of Jesus, the idea of a sacrificial person, who is offered up to God as an atonement for sin. What Jesus preached was a new birth of the human soul; what Paul preached was the ancient religion of priest and altar and propitiatory bloodshed. Jesus was to him the Easter lamb, that traditional human victim without spot or blemish who haunts all the religions of the dark white peoples. Paul came to the Nazarenes with overwhelming force because he came to them with this completely satisfactory explanation

<sup>1</sup> See *Judaism and St. Paul*, by C. G. Montefiore, for some interesting speculations on the religion of Paul before his conversion. See also the very interesting paper on St. Paul in Dean Inge's *Outspoken Essays* already quoted in a footnote.

<sup>2</sup> Paul's Greek is very good. He is affected by the philosophical jargon of the Hellenistic schools and by that of Stoicism. But his mastery of sublime language is amazing.—G. M.



of the disaster of the crucifixion. It was a brilliant elucidation of what had been utterly perplexing.

Paul had never seen Jesus. His knowledge of Jesus and his teaching must have been derived from the hearsay of the original disciples. It is clear that he apprehended much of the spirit of Jesus and his doctrine of a new birth, but he built this into a theological system, a very subtle and ingenious system, whose appeal to this day is chiefly intellectual. And it is clear that the faith of the Nazarenes, which he found as a doctrine of motive and a way of living, he made into a doctrine of *belief*. He found the Nazarenes with a spirit and hope, and he left them Christians with the beginning of a creed.

But we must refer the reader to the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles for an account of Paul's mission and teaching. He was a man of enormous energy, and he taught at Jerusalem, Antioch, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome.

Possibly he went into Spain. The manner of his death is not certainly known, but it is said that he was killed in Rome during the reign of Nero. A great fire had burnt a large part of Rome, and the new sect was accused of causing this. The rapid spread of Christian teaching certainly owes more to Paul than to any other single man. Within two decades of the crucifixion this new religion was already attracting the attention of the Roman rulers in several provinces. If it had acquired a theology in the hands of Saint Paul, it still retained much of the revolutionary and ele-



Photo: Mansell.

ISIS AND HORUS.

mentary quality of the teachings of Jesus. It had become somewhat more tolerant of private property; it would accept wealthy adherents without insisting upon the communization of their riches, and Saint Paul has condoned the institution of slavery ("Slaves, be obedient to your masters"),<sup>1</sup> but it still set its face like flint against certain fundamental institutions of the Roman world. It would not tolerate the godhead of Caesar; not even by a mute gesture at the altar would the Christians consent to worship the Emperor, though their lives were at stake in the matter. It denounced the gladiatorial shows. Unarmed, but possessing enormous powers of passive resistance, Christianity thus appeared at the outset plainly as rebellion, striking at the political if not at the economic essentials of the imperial system. The first evidences of Christianity in non-Christian literature we find when perplexed Roman officials began to write to one another and exchange views upon the strange problem presented by this infectious

rebellion of otherwise harmless people.

Much of the history of the Christians in the first two centuries of the Christian era is very obscure. They spread far and wide throughout the world, but we know very little of their ideas

<sup>1</sup> The spirit of Jesus, the animating spirit of Christianity, which breathes through the gospels, was flatly opposed both to private property and slavery, but the attitude of the Christians was never so definite. Generally they ameliorated rather than abolished.—H. G. W.

Patristic theory justified slavery as a result of the Fall. See Carlyle, *Medieval Political Theory in the West*.—E. B.



or their ceremonies and methods during that time. As yet they had no settled creeds, and there can be little doubt that there were wide local variations in their beliefs and disciplines during this formless period. But whatever their local differences, everywhere they seem to have carried much of the spirit of Jesus; and though everywhere they aroused bitter enmity and active counter-propaganda, the very charges made against them witness to the general goodness of their lives.

During this indefinite time a considerable amount of a sort of theocrasia seems to have gone on between the Christian cult and the almost equally popular and widely diffused Mithraic cult, and the cult of Serapis<sup>1</sup>-Isis-Horus.

to speak of Jesus shedding his blood for mankind is really a most inaccurate expression. But Mithraism centred upon some now forgotten mysteries about Mithras sacrificing a sacred and benevolent bull; all the Mithraic shrines seem to have contained a figure of Mithras killing this bull, which bleeds copiously, and from this blood a new life sprang. The Mithraist votary actually bathed in the blood of the sacrificial bull, and was "born again" thereby. At his initiation he went beneath a scaffolding on which the bull was killed, and the blood ran down on him.<sup>2</sup>

The contributions of the Alexandrine cult to Christian thought and practices were even more considerable. In the personality of



Photo: Mansell.

MITHRAS AND THE BULL.

From the former it would seem the Christians adopted Sun-day as their chief day of worship instead of the Jewish Sabbath, the abundant use of candles in religious ceremonies, the legend of the adoration by the shepherds, and probably also those ideas and phrases, so distinctive of certain sects to this day, about being "washed in the blood" of Christ, and of Christ being a blood sacrifice. For we have to remember that a death by crucifixion is hardly a more bloody death than hanging;

<sup>1</sup> Serapis was a synthesis of Osiris and Apis.

Horus, who was at once the son of Serapis and identical with Serapis, it was natural for the Christians to find an illuminating analogue in their struggles with the Pauline mysteries. From that to the identification of Mary with Isis, and her elevation to a rank quasi-divine—in spite of the saying of Jesus about his

<sup>2</sup> See Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, chap. xii. See also Cumont's *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* for a very clear account of the gradual development of Roman Paganism into a religion very similar to Christianity *pari passu* with the development of Christianity.





"THE DARKNESS CLOSED UPON THE HILL; THE DISTANT CITY SET ABOUT ITS PREPARATIONS FOR THE PASSOVER; SCARCELY ANYONE BUT THAT KNOT OF MOURNERS ON THE WAY TO THEIR HOMES TROUBLED WHETHER JESUS OF NAZARETH WAS STILL DYING OR ALREADY DEAD. . . ."







mother and his brothers that we have already quoted—was also a very natural step. Natural, too, was it for Christianity to adopt, almost insensibly, the practical methods of the popular religions of the time. Its priests took on the head-shaving and the characteristic garments of the Egyptian priests, because that sort of thing seemed to be the right way of distinguishing a priest. One accretion followed another. Almost insensibly the originally revolutionary teaching was buried under these customary

acquisitions. We have already tried to imagine Gautama Buddha returning to Tibet, and his amazement at the worship of his own image in Lhasa. We will but suggest the parallel amazement of some earnest Nazarene who had known and followed his dusty and travel-worn Master through the dry sunlight of Galilee, restored suddenly to this world and visiting, let us say, a mass in St. Peter's at Rome, at learning that the consecrated wafer upon the altar was none other than his crucified teacher.<sup>1</sup>

Religion in a world community is not many things but one thing, and it was inevitable that all the living religious faiths in the world at the time, and all the philosophy and religious thought that came into contact with Christianity, should come to an account with Christianity and exchange phrases and ideas. The hopes of the early Nazarenes had identified Jesus with the Christ; the brilliant mind of Paul had surrounded his career with mystical significance. Jesus had called men and women to a giant undertaking, to the renunciation of self, to the new birth into the kingdom of love. The line of least resistance for the flagging convert was to intellectualize himself away from this plain doctrine, this stark proposition, into complicated



Photo: Mansell.

MITHRAS.

theories and ceremonies—that would leave his essential self alone. How much easier is it to sprinkle oneself with blood than to purge oneself from malice and competition; to eat bread and drink wine and pretend one had absorbed divinity, to give candles rather than the heart, to shave the head and retain the scheming privacy of the brain inside it! The world was full of such evasive philosophy and theological stuff in the opening centuries of the Christian Era. It is not for us here to enlarge

upon the distinctive features of Neo-platonism, Gnosticism, Philonism, and the like teachings which abounded in the Alexandrian world. But it was all one world with that in which the early Christians were living. The writings of such men as Origen, Plotinus, and Augustine witness to the inevitable give and take of the time.

Jesus called himself the Son of God and also the Son of Man; but he laid little stress on who he was or what he was, and much upon the teachings of the Kingdom. In declaring that he was more than a man and divine, Paul and his other followers, whether they were right or wrong, opened up a vast field of argument. Was Jesus God? Or had God created him? Was he identical with God or separable from God? It is not the function of the historian to answer such questions, but he is bound to note them, and to note how unavoidable they were, because of the immense influence they have had upon the whole subsequent life of western mankind. By the fourth century of the Christian Era we find all the Christian communities so agitated and exasperated by tortuous and elusive arguments about the nature of God as to be largely negligent of the simpler teachings of charity, service, and brotherhood that Jesus had inculcated.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Father Hugh Benson's account of the procession of the Host in his book *Lourdes*.



The chief views that the historian notices are those of the Arians, the Sabellians, and the Trinitarians. The Arians followed Arius, who taught that Christ was less than God; the Sabellians taught practically that there were three equal Gods, God the Father, God the Son (with whom Jesus was identified), and God the Holy Ghost; the Trinitarians, of whom Athanasius was the great leader, taught that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost were not three gods, but one God. The reader is referred to the Athanasian Creed<sup>1</sup> for the exact expression of the latter doctrine, and for the alarming consequences to him of any failure to grasp and believe it. To Gibbon he must go for a derisive statement of these controversies.

The present writer can deal with them neither with awe nor derision; they seem to him, he must confess, a disastrous ebullition of the human mind entirely inconsistent with the plain account of Jesus preserved for us in the gospels. Orthodoxy became a test not only for Christian office, but for Christian trade and help. A small point of doctrine might mean affluence or beggary to a man. It is difficult to read the surviving literature of the

time without a strong sense of the dogmatism, the spites, rivalries, and pedantries of the men who tore Christianity to pieces for the sake of these theological refinements. Most of the Trinitarian disputants—for it is chiefly Trinitarian documents that survive—accuse their antagonists, probably with truth, of mean and secondary motives, but they do so in a manner that betrays their own base spirit very clearly. Arius, for example, is accused of heretical opposition because he was not appointed Bishop of Alexandria. Riots and excommunications

<sup>1</sup> In any prayer book of the Episcopalian Church.

and banishments punctuated these controversies, and finally came official persecutions. These fine differences about the constitution of the Deity interwove with politics and international disputes. Men who quarrelled over business affairs, wives who wished to annoy their husbands, developed antagonistic views upon this exalted theme. Most of the barbarian invaders of the empire were Arians; probably because their simple minds found the Trinitarian position incomprehensible.

It is easy for the sceptic to mock at these disputes. But even if we think that these attempts to say exactly how God was related to himself were presumptuous and intellectually monstrous, nevertheless we are bound to recog-

nize that beneath these preposterous refinements of impossible dogmas there lay often a real passion for truth—even if it was truth ill conceived. Both sides produced genuine martyrs. And the zeal of these controversies, though it is a base and often malicious zeal, did at any rate make the Christian sects very energetically propagandist and educational. Moreover, because the history of the Christian body in the fourth and fifth



Photo: Mansell.

TITUS, WHO BESIEGED AND DESTROYED JERUSALEM.

centuries is largely a record of these unhappy disputes, that must not blind us to the fact that the spirit of Jesus did live and ennoble many lives among the Christians. The text of the gospels, though it was probably tampered with during this period, was not destroyed, and Jesus of Nazareth, in his own manifest inimitable greatness, still taught through that text. Nor did these unhappy quarrels prevent Christianity from maintaining a united front against gladiatorial shows and against slavery, and against the degrading worship of idols and of the god-Cæsar.



## § 6

So far as it challenged the divinity of Cæsar and the characteristic institutions of the empire, Christianity is to be regarded as a rebellious and disintegrating movement, and so it was regarded by most of the emperors before Constantine the Great. It encountered considerable hostility, and at last systematic attempts to suppress it. Decius was the first emperor to organize an official persecution, and the great era of the martyrs was in the time of Diocletian (303 and following years). The persecution of Diocletian was indeed the crowning struggle of the old idea of the god-emperor against the already great and powerful organization that denied his divinity. Diocletian had reorganized the monarchy upon lines of extreme absolutism; he had abolished the last vestiges of republican institutions; he was the first emperor to surround himself completely with the awe-inspiring etiquette of an eastern monarch. He was forced by the logic of his assumptions to attempt the complete eradication of a system that flatly denied them. The test in the persecution was that the Christian was required to offer sacrifice to the emperor.

“Though Diocletian, still averse to the effusion of blood, had moderated the fury of Galerius, who proposed that everyone refusing to offer sacrifice should immediately be burnt alive, the penalties inflicted on the obstinacy of the Christians might be deemed sufficiently rigorous and effectual. It was enacted that their churches, in all the provinces of the empire, should be demolished to their foundations; and the punishment of death was denounced against all who should presume to hold any secret assemblies for the purpose of religious worship. The philosophers, who now assumed the unworthy office of directing the blind zeal of persecution, had diligently studied the nature and genius of the Christian religion; and as they were not ignorant that the speculative doctrines of the faith were supposed to be contained in the writings of the prophets, of the evangelists, and of the apostles, they most probably suggested the order, that the bishops and presbyters should deliver all their sacred books into the hands of the magistrates, who were commanded under the severest penalties,

to burn them in a public and solemn manner. By the same edict, the property of the church was at once confiscated; and the several parts of which it might consist were either sold to the highest bidder, united to the imperial domain, bestowed on the cities or corporations, or granted to the solicitations of rapacious courtiers. After taking such effectual measures to abolish the worship, and to dissolve the government of the Christians, it was thought necessary to subject to the most intolerable hardships the condition of those perverse individuals who should still reject the religion of nature, of Rome, and of their ancestors. Persons of a liberal birth were declared incapable of holding any honours or employments; slaves were for ever deprived of the hopes of freedom; and the whole body of the Christians were put out of the protection of the law. The judges were authorized to hear and to determine every action that was brought against a Christian; but the Christians were not permitted to complain of any injury which they themselves had suffered; and those unfortunate sectaries were exposed to the severity, while they were excluded from the benefits, of public justice. . . . This edict was scarcely exhibited to the public view, in the most conspicuous place in Nicomedia, before it was torn down by the hands of a Christian, who expressed at the same time, by the bitterest of invectives, his contempt as well as abhorrence for such impious and tyrannical governors. His offence, according to the mildest laws, amounted to treason, and deserved death, and if it be true that he was a person of rank and education, those circumstances could serve only to aggravate his guilt. He was burnt, or rather roasted, by a slow fire; and his executioners, zealous to revenge the personal insult which had been offered to the emperors, exhausted every refinement of cruelty without being able to subdue his patience, or to alter the steady and insulting smile which in his dying agonies he still preserved in his countenance.”<sup>1</sup>

So with the death of this unnamed martyr the great persecution opened. But, as Gibbon points out, our information as to its severity is of very doubtful value. He estimates the

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xvi.



total of victims as about two thousand, and contrasts this with the known multitudes of Christians martyred by their fellow Christians during the period of the Reformation. Gibbon was strongly prejudiced against Christianity, and here he seems disposed to minimize the tortitude and sufferings of the Christians. In many provinces, no doubt, there must have been a great reluctance to enforce the edict. But there was a systematic hunt for the copies of Holy Writ, and in many places a systematic destruction of Christian churches. There were tortures and executions, as well as a great crowding of the gaols with Christian presbyters and bishops. We have to remember that the Christian community was now a very considerable element of the population, and that an influential proportion of the officials charged with the execution of the edict were themselves of the proscribed faith. Galerius, who was in charge of the eastern provinces, was among the most vigorous of the persecutors, but in the end, on his death bed (311), he realized the futility of his attacks upon this huge community, and granted toleration in an edict, the gist of which Gibbon translates as follows:—

“Among the important cares which have occupied our mind for the utility and preservation of the empire, it was our intention to correct and re-establish all things according to the ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans. We were particularly desirous of reclaiming into the way of reason and nature the deluded Christians who had renounced the religion and ceremonies instituted by their fathers; and presumptuously despising the practice of antiquity, had invented extravagant laws and opinions according to the dictates of their fancy, and had collected a various

society from the different provinces of our empire. The edicts which we have published to enforce the worship of the gods having exposed many of the Christians to danger and distress, many having suffered death, and many more who still persist in their impious folly, being left destitute of any public exercise of religion, we are disposed to extend to those unhappy men the effects of our wonted clemency. We permit them, therefore, freely to profess their private opinions and to assemble in their conventicles without fear or molestation, provided always that they preserve a due respect to the established laws and government. By another rescript we shall signify our intentions to the judges and magistrates; and we hope that our indulgence will engage the Christians to offer up their prayers to the deity whom they adore, for our safety and prosperity, for their own, and for that of the republic.”

In a few years Constantine the Great was reigning, first as associated emperor (312) and then as the sole ruler (324), and the severer trials of Christianity were over. If Christianity was a rebellious and destructive force towards a pagan Rome, it was a unifying and organizing force within its own communion. This fact the genius of Constantine grasped. The spirit

of Jesus, for all the doctrinal dissensions that prevailed, made a great freemasonry throughout and even beyond the limits of the empire. The faith was spreading among the barbarians beyond the border; it had extended into Persia and Central Asia. It provided the only hope of moral solidarity he could discern in the great welter of narrow views and self-seeking over which he had to rule. It, and it alone, had the facilities for organizing *will*, for the need of which the empire was



Photo: A. Giraudon.

CONSTANTINE (FROM THE LOUVRE)



falling to pieces like a piece of rotten cloth. In 312 Constantine had to fight for Rome and his position against Maxentius. He put the Christian monogram upon the shields and banners of his troops, and claimed that the God of the Christians had fought for him in his complete victory at the battle of the Milvian Bridge just outside Rome. By this act he renounced all those pretensions to divinity that the vanity of Alexander the Great had first brought into the western world, and with the applause and enthusiastic support of the Christians he established himself as a monarch more absolute even than Diocletian.

In a few years' time Christianity had become the official religion of the empire, and in A.D. 337 Constantine upon his death bed was baptized as a Christian.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Here, from another point of view, are some remarks upon the acceptance of Christianity by the empire. Evidently the Church—i.e. the Secret Friendly Society, based on the proletariat of the eastern manufacturing towns—was becoming stronger and stronger. (The evidence of this is plentiful.) Diocletian summoned his two associated Cæsars to a conference on the subject, and they decided to persecute, to try to crush the "camorra." They persecuted and failed, and Diocletian resigned. Constantine the Great, the next claimant to the empire, made terms with the camorra and succeeded. He established it as official, and overcame its hatred of Rome by showering wealth and power on it. Eventually, when in fear of death, he got baptized. If one imagines a blend of Lenin and some Indian sect, drawing its strength from the "hunkey" populations of big American towns, and secret in its organization . . . you will perhaps get something like the Christianity of this time. The conception of the blameless and saintly Early Christian is, I think, romance. No



Photo : Anderson.

CONSTANTINE.

## § 7

The figure of Constantine the Great is at least as cardinal in history as that of Alexander the Great or Augustus Cæsar. We know very little of his personality or

doubt there were many saintly people; but consider the appalling accusations made by all the Christian sects against each other, and the furious denunciation of the turbulent Christian monastics by Augustine. Also consider what a spirit lies behind the Book of Revelation† We should certainly hang and shoot if we found such a book circulating in India: a series of elaborate and horrific curses on the Roman Empire, until at last the Christians march in Roman blood "up

to the bridles of the horses," rejoicing and praising the name of the Lamb. I do not blame the Revelationist; such hatred is the natural answer to persecution. But do not let us call it lamb-like innocence."—G. M.

I do not understand the reference to the Book of the Revelation of St. John. (1) That book came long prior to Constantine; (2) it says nothing about Christians marching in Roman blood "up to the bridles of the horses." The whole note hurts me, and I should be glad to see it deleted.—E. B.

I have too much respect for G. M. to delete his note, and too much for E. B. to suppress his protest. And indeed these two notes do tell, as nothing in the text could do, the unsettled and controversial nature of all judgments upon popular quality and popular movements in history. The shrewd reader of the early chapters of this *Outline* will already have detected evidences of a dispute between G. M. and the writer about the quality of the Athenian crowd. Upon such questions, even when the case is a contemporary one, judgments seem to be inseparable from temperamental and social bias. Witness the conflicting estimates reasonable men will make of the Bolsheviki and of the American labour extremities to-day. Whatever one's private opinion may be, the proper course when one is writing a history seems to be to state it simply as a personal opinion—and to quote contrasting representative views.—H. G. W.



of his private life; no Plutarch, no Suetonius, has preserved any intimate and living details about him. Abuse we have of him from his enemies, and much obviously fulsome panegyric to set against it; but none of these writers give us a living character of him; he is a party symbol for them, a partisan flag. It is stated by the hostile Zosimus that, like Sargon I, he was of illegitimate birth; his father was a distinguished general and his mother, Helena, an innkeeper's daughter of Nish in Serbia. Gibbon,<sup>1</sup> however, is of opinion that there was a valid marriage. In any case it was a lowly marriage, and the personal genius of Constantine prevailed against serious disadvantages. He was comparatively illiterate, he knew little or no Greek. It appears to be true that he banished his eldest son Crispus, and caused him to be executed at the instigation of the young man's stepmother, Fausta; and it is also recorded that he was afterwards convinced of the innocence of Crispus, and caused Fausta to be executed—according to one account by being boiled to death in her bath, and according to another by being exposed naked to wild beasts on a desolate mountain—while there is also very satisfactory documentary evidence that she survived him. If she was executed, the fact remains that her three sons, together with two nephews, became the appointed heirs of Constantine. Clearly there is nothing solid to be got from this libellous tangle, and such soufflé as is possible with these scanty materials is to be found admirably done by Gibbon (chap. xviii.). Gibbon, because of his anti-Christian animus, is hostile to Constantine; but he admits that he was temperate and chaste. He accuses him of prodigality because of his great public buildings, and of being vain and dissolute (!) because in his old age he wore a wig—Gibbon wore his own hair tied with a becoming black bow—and a diadem and magnificent robes. But all the later emperors after Diocletian wore diadems and magnificent robes.

But if the personality of Constantine the Great remains phantom-like, if the particulars of his domestic life reveal nothing but a vague tragedy, we can still guess at much that was in

<sup>1</sup> q.v., *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xiv.

his mind. It must, in the closing years of his life, have been a very lonely mind. He was more of an autocrat than any previous emperor had been—that is to say, he had less counsel and help. No class of public-spirited and trustworthy men remained; no senate nor council shared and developed his schemes. How much he apprehended the geographical weakness of the empire, how far he saw the complete disaster that was now so near, we can only guess. He made his real capital at Nicomedia in Bithynia; Constantinople across the Bosphorus was still being built when he died. Like Diocletian, he seems to have realized the broken-backed outline of his dominions, and to have concentrated his attention in foreign affairs and more particularly on the affairs of Hungary, South Russia, and the Black Sea. He reorganized all the official machinery of the empire; he gave it a new constitution and sought to establish a dynasty. He was a restless remaker of things; the social confusion he tried to fix by assisting in the development of a caste system. This was following up the work of his great predecessor Diocletian. He tried to make a caste of the peasants and small cultivators, and to restrict them from moving from their holdings. In fact he sought to make them serfs. The supply of slave labour had fallen off because the empire was no longer an invading but an invaded power; he turned to serfdom as the remedy. His creative efforts necessitated unprecedently heavy taxation. All these things point to a lonely and forcible mind. It is in his manifest understanding of the need of some unifying moral force if the empire was to hold together that his claim to originality lies.

It was only after he had turned to Christianity that he seems to have realized the fierce dissensions of the theologians. He made a great effort to reconcile these differences in order to have one uniform and harmonious teaching in the community, and at his initiative a general council of the Church was held at Nicæa, a town near Nicomedia and over against Constantinople, in 325. Eusebius gives a curious account of this strange gathering, over which the Emperor, although he was not yet a baptized Christian, presided. It was not his first council of the Church, for he had already (in 313) presided over a council at Arles. He sat in



the midst of the council of Nicæa upon a golden throne, and as he had little Greek, we must suppose he was reduced to watching the countenances and gestures of the debaters, and listening to their intonations. The council was a stormy one. When old Arius rose to speak, one Nicholas of Myra struck him in the face, and afterwards many ran out, thrusting their fingers into their ears in affected horror at the old man's heresies. One is tempted to imagine the great emperor, deeply anxious for the soul of his empire, firmly resolved to end these divisions, bending towards his interpreters to ask them the meaning of the uproar.

This council produced the Nicene Creed, a strictly Trinitarian statement, and the Emperor sustained it. But afterwards, when Athanasius bore too hardly upon the Arians, he had him banished from Alexandria; and when the church at Alexandria would have excommunicated Arius, he obliged it to readmit him to communion.

#### § 8

This date 325 A.D. is a very convenient date in our history. It is the date of the first complete general ("œcumenical") council of the entire Christian world. (That at Arles we have mentioned had been a gathering of only the western half.) It marks the definite entry upon the stage of human affairs of the Christian church and of Christianity as it is generally understood in the world to-day. It marks the exact definition of Christian teaching by the Nicene Creed.

It is necessary that we should recall the reader's attention to the profound differences between this fully developed Christianity of Nicæa and the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. All Christians hold that the latter is completely contained in the former, but that is a question outside our province. What is clearly apparent is that the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth was a *prophetic teaching* of the new type that began with the Hebrew prophets. It was not priestly, it had no consecrated temple and no altar. It had no rites and ceremonies. Its sacrifice was "a broken and a contrite heart." Its only organization was an organization of preachers, and its chief function was the sermon.

But the fully fledged Christianity of the fourth century, though it preserved as its nucleus the teachings of Jesus in the gospels, was mainly a *priestly religion* of a type already familiar to the world for thousands of years. The centre of its elaborate ritual was an altar, and the essential act of worship the sacrifice, by a consecrated priest, of the mass. And it had a rapidly developing organization of deacons, priests, and bishops.

But if Christianity had taken on an extraordinary outward resemblance to the cults of Serapis, Ammon, or Bel-Marduk, we must remember that even its priestcraft had certain novel features. Nowhere did it possess any quasi-divine image of God. There was no head temple containing the god, because God was everywhere. There was no holy of holies. Its widespread altars were all addressed to the unseen universal Trinity. Even in its most archaic aspects there was in Christianity something new.

A very important thing for us to note is the rôle played by the Emperor in the fixation of Christianity. Not only was the council of Nicæa assembled by Constantine the Great, but all the great councils, the two at Constantinople (381 and 553), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451) were called together by the imperial power. And it is very manifest that in much of the history of Christianity at this time the spirit of Constantine the Great is as evident or more evident than the spirit of Jesus. He was, we have said, a pure autocrat. The last vestiges of Roman republicanism had vanished in the days of Aurelian and Diocletian. To the best of his lights he was trying to remake the crazy empire while there was yet time, and he worked without any councillors, any public opinion, or any sense of the need of such aids and checks. The idea of stamping out all controversy and division, stamping out all thought, by imposing one dogmatic creed upon all believers, is an altogether autocratic idea, it is the idea of the single-handed man who feels that to work at all he must be free from opposition and criticism. The history of the Church under his influence becomes now therefore a history of the violent struggles that were bound to follow upon his sudden and rough summons to unanimity. From him the Church acquired the disposition to

The Establishment of Official Christianity.



be authoritative and unquestioned, to develop a centralized organization and run parallel to the empire.

A second great autocrat who presently contributed to the stamping upon Catholic Christianity of a distinctly authoritative character was Theodosius I, Theodosius the Great (379-395). He forbade the unorthodox to hold meetings, handed over all churches to the Trinitarians, and overthrew the heathen temples throughout the empire, and in 390 he caused the great statue of Serapis at Alexandria to be destroyed. There was to be no rivalry, no qualification to the rigid unity of the Church.

Here we cannot tell of the vast internal troubles of the Church,<sup>1</sup> its indigestions of heresy; of Arians and Paulicians, of Gnostics and Manicheans. Had it been less authoritative and more tolerant of intellectual variety, it might perhaps have been a still more powerful body than it became. But in spite of all these disorders, it did for some time maintain a

<sup>1</sup> On the rise of dogma or tradition in the Church, especially at Rome, see Davis, *Mediæval Europe* (Home University Library).—E. B.

conception of human unity more intimate and far wider than was ever achieved before. By the fifth century Christendom was already becoming greater, sturdier, and more enduring than any empire had ever been because it was something not merely imposed upon men, but interwoven with the texture of their minds. It reached out far beyond the utmost limits of the empire, into Armenia, Persia, Abyssinia, Ireland, Germany, India, and Turkestan. "Though made up of widely scattered congregations, it was thought of as one body of Christ, one people of God. This ideal unity found expression in many ways. Intercommunication between the various Christian communities was very active. Christians upon a journey were always sure of a warm welcome and hospitable entertainment from their fellow-disciples. Messengers and letters were sent freely from one church to another. Missionaries and evangelists went continually from place to place. Documents of various kinds, including gospels and apostolic epistles, circulated widely. Thus in various ways the feeling of unity found expression, and







Photo: Alinari.

REMAINS OF THE PALACE OF THEODORIC, RAVENNA.

the development of widely separated parts of Christendom conformed more or less closely to a common type."<sup>1</sup>

Christendom retained at least the formal tradition of this general unity of spirit until 1054, when the Latin-speaking Western church and the main and original Greek-speaking church, the "Orthodox" church, severed themselves from one another, ostensibly upon the question of adding two words to the creed. The older creed had declared that the "Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father." The Latins wanted to add, and did add "*Filioque*" (=and from the son), and placed the Greeks out of their communion because they would not follow this lead. But already as early as the fifth century the Christians in Eastern Syria, Persia, Central Asia—there were churches at Merv, Herat, and Samarkand—and India had detached themselves on a similar score. These

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Church History," p. 336.

extremely interesting Asiatic Christians are known in history as the Nestorian Church, and their influence extended into China. The Egyptian and Abyssinian churches also detached themselves very early upon similarly inexplicable points. Long before this formal separation of the Latin and Greek-speaking halves of the main church, however, there was a practical separation following upon the breaking up of the empire. Their conditions diverged from the first. While the Greek-speaking Eastern Empire held together and the emperor at Constantinople remained dominant in the Church, the Latin half of the empire, as we have already told, collapsed, and left the Church free of any such imperial control. Moreover, while ecclesiastical authority in the empire of Constantinople was divided between the high-bishops, or patriarchs, of Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, authority in the West was concentrated in the patriarch, or Pope, of Rome. The Bishop of



Rome had always been recognized as first among the patriarchs, and all these things conspired to justify exceptional pretensions upon his part to a quasi-imperial authority. With the final fall of the Western Empire, he took over the ancient title of *pontifex maximus*, which the emperors had held, and so became the supreme sacrificial priest of the Roman tradition. Over the Christians of the West his supremacy was fully recognized, but from the beginning it had to be urged with discretion within the dominions of the Eastern emperor and the jurisdictions of the other four patriarchs.

Ideas of worldly rule by the Church were already prevalent in the fourth century. Saint Augustine, a citizen of Hippo in North Africa, who wrote between 354 and 430, gave expression to the developing political ideas of the Church in his book *The City of God*. *The City of God* represents the possibility of making the world into a theological and organized Kingdom of Heaven. The city, as Augustine puts it, is "a spiritual society of the predestined faithful,"<sup>1</sup> but the step from that to a political application was not a very wide one. The Church was to be the ruler of the world over all nations, the divinely led ruling power over a great league of terrestrial states. In later years these ideas developed into a definite political theory and policy. As the barbarian races settled and became Chris-

<sup>1</sup> E. B. (quoted from Tröltzsch).

tian, the Pope began to claim an overlordship of their kings. In a few centuries the Pope had become in theory, and to a certain extent in practice, the high priest, censor, judge, and divine monarch of Christendom; his influence extended in the west far beyond the utmost range of the old empire, to Ireland, Norway and Sweden, and over all Germany. For more than a thousand years this idea of the unity of Christendom, of Christendom as a sort of vast Amphictyony, whose members even in war time were restrained from many extremities by the idea of a common brotherhood and a common loyalty to the Church, dominated Europe. The history of Europe from the fifth century onward to the fifteenth is very largely the history of the failure of this great idea of a divine world government to realize itself in practice.

#### § 9

We have already given an account in the previous chapter

The Map of Europe, chief A.D. 500.

irruptions of the barbarian races. We may now, with the help of a map, make a brief review of the political divisions of Europe at the close of the fifth century. No vestige of the Western Empire, the original Roman Empire, remained as such. Over many parts of Europe a sort of legendary overlordship of the Hellenic Eastern Empire held its place in men's minds. The emperor at Constantinople was, in theory at



Photo: Alinari.

TOMB OF THEODORIC, RAVENNA.



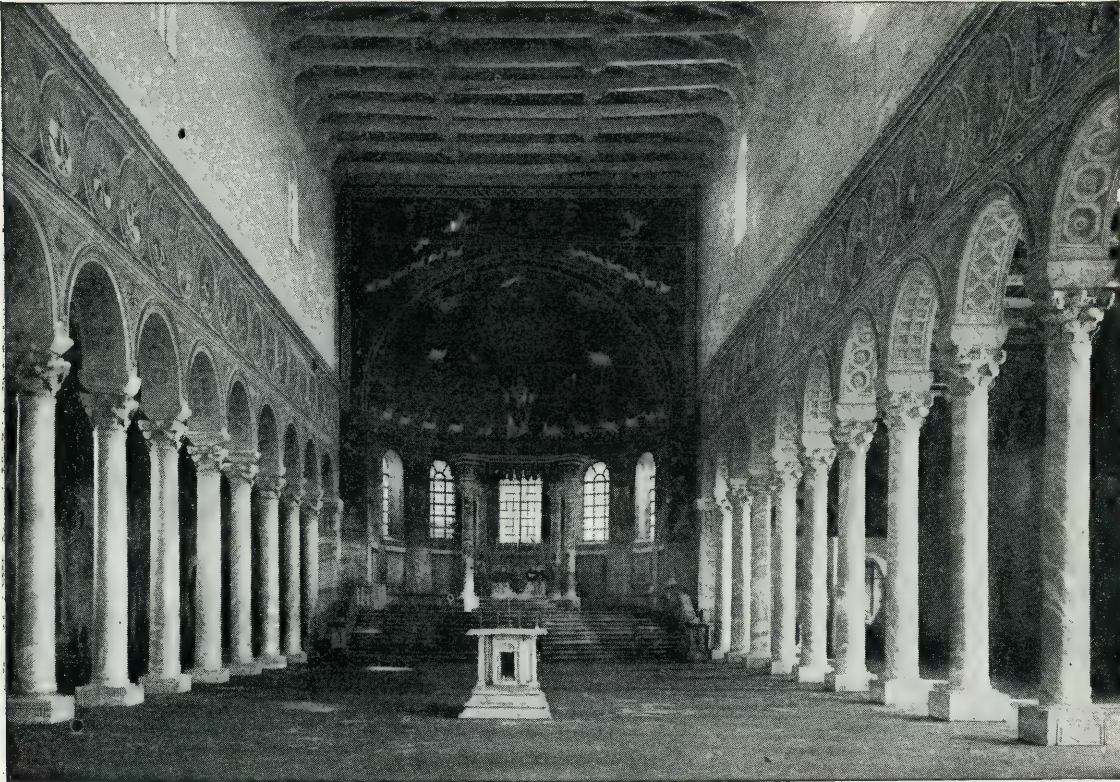


Photo : Alinari

INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF S. APOLLINARE IN CLASSE, RAVENNA.

least, still emperor. In Britain, the quite barbaric Teutonic Angles, Saxons and Jutes had conquered the eastern half of England ; in the west of the island the Britons still held out, but were gradually being forced back into Wales and Cornwall. The Anglo-Saxons seem to have been among the most ruthless and effective of barbarian conquerors, for wherever they prevailed, their language completely replaced the Keltic or Latin speech—it is not certain which<sup>1</sup>—used by the British. These Anglo-Saxons were as yet not Christianized. Most of Gaul, Holland, and the Rhineland was under the fairly vigorous, Christianized, and much more civilized kingdom of the Franks. But the Rhone valley was under the separate kingdom of the Burgundians. Spain and some of the south of France were under the rule of the Visigoths, but the Suevi were in possession of the north-west corner of the peninsula. Of the Vandal kingdom in Africa we have already written ; and Italy, still in its population and habits Roman, came under the

<sup>1</sup> See Haverfield, *The Romanization of Roman Britain*.—E. B.

rule of the Ostrogoths. There was no emperor in Rome, but Theodoric I ruled there as the first of a line of Gothic kings, and his rule extended across the Alps into Pannonia and down the Adriatic to Dalmatia and Serbia. To the east of the Gothic kingdom the emperors of Constantinople ruled definitely. The Bulgars were still at this time a Mongolian tribe of horse-riding nomads in the region of the Volga ; the Aryan Serbs had recently come southward to the shores of the Black Sea into the original home of the Visigoths ; the Turko-Finnish Magyars were not yet in Europe. The Lombards were as yet north of the Danube.

The sixth century was marked by a phase of vigour on the part of the Eastern Empire under the Emperor Justinian (527-565). The Vandal kingdom was recovered in 534 ; the Goths were expelled from Italy in 553. So soon as Justinian was dead (565), the Lombards descended into Italy and settled in Lombardy, but they left Ravenna, Rome, Southern Italy, and North Africa under the rule of the Eastern Empire.

Such was the political condition of the world



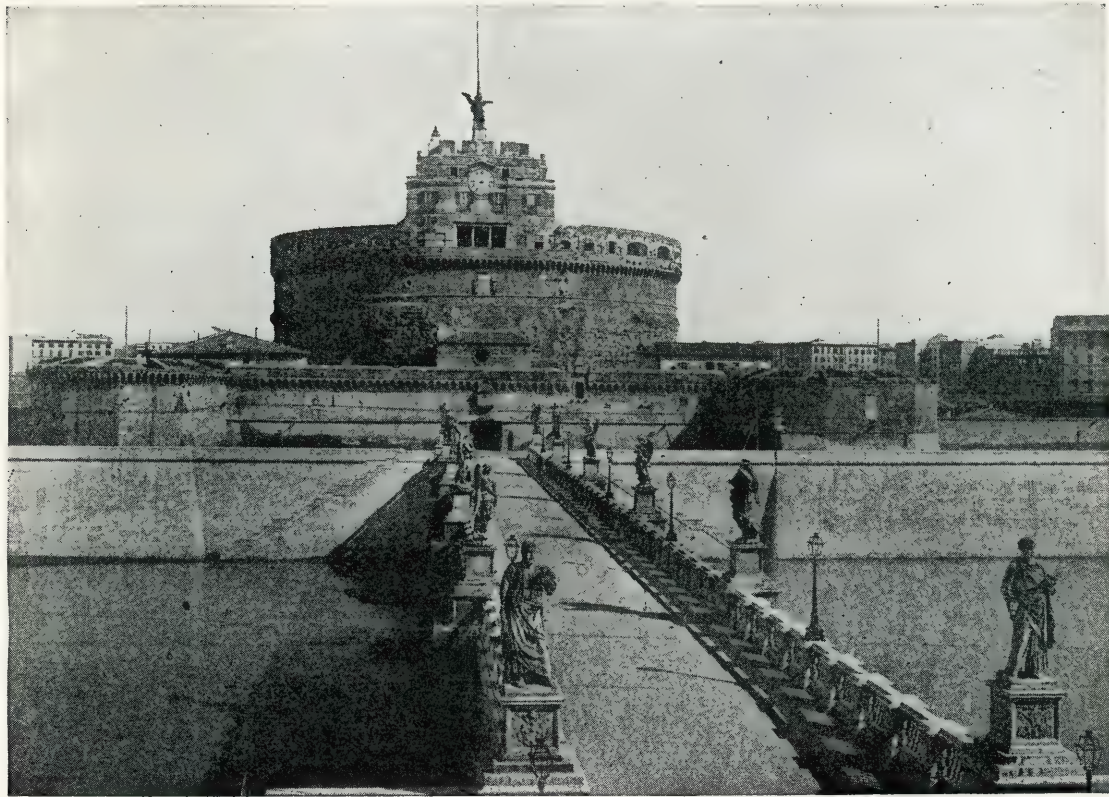


Photo : Anderson.

HADRIAN'S TOMB, ROME (CASTLE OF THE HOLY ANGEL).

in which the idea of Christendom developed. The daily life of that time was going on at a very low level indeed physically, intellectually, and morally. It is frequently said that Europe in the sixth and seventh centuries relapsed into barbarism, but that does not express the reality of the case very well. Barbarism is a social order of an elementary type, orderly within its limits; the state of Europe beneath its political fragmentation was a social disorder. Its *morale* was not that of a kraal, but that of a slum. In a savage kraal a savage knows that he belongs to a community, and lives and acts accordingly; in a slum, the individual neither knows of nor acts in relation to any greater being.

Only very slowly and weakly did Christianity restore that lost sense of community and teach men to rally about the idea of Christendom. The social and economic structure of the Roman Empire was in ruins. That civilization had been a civilization of wealth and political power sustained by the limitation and slavery of the great mass of mankind. It had presented a

spectacle of outward splendour and luxurious refinement, but beneath that brave outward show were cruelty, stupidity, and stagnation. It had to break down, it had to be removed before anything better could replace it.

We have already called attention to its intellectual deadness. For three centuries it had produced neither science nor literature.<sup>1</sup> It is only where men are to be found neither too rich and powerful to be tempted into extravagant indulgences nor too poor and limited to care for anything beyond the daily need that those disinterested curiosities and serene impulses can have play that give sane philosophy and

<sup>1</sup> No literature! I demur entirely. Apuleius, Ammianus, St. Augustine, the Vulgate, Claudian, Sidonius Apollinaris, Ausonius—I mention but a few names—are not these literature?—E. B.

I forgot the *Golden Ass* and St. Augustine as coming into the Imperial period, but do these two names save the situation? E. B. ekes out with one second-rate historian, a translation, three court poets. Yet we are dealing here with the literature of a "world" empire.—H. G. W.



science and great art to the world, and the plutocracy of Rome had made such a class impossible. When men and women are unlimited and unrestrained, the evidence of history shows clearly that they are all liable to become monsters of self-indulgence; when, on the other hand, they are driven and unhappy, then their impulse is towards immoderate tragical resorts, towards wild revolts or towards the austerities and intensities of religion.

It is not perhaps true to say that the world became miserable in these "dark ages" to which we have now come; much nearer the truth is it to say that the violent and vulgar fraud of Roman imperialism, that world of politicians, adventurers, landowners and financiers, collapsed into a sea of misery that was already there. Our histories of these times are very imperfect: there were few places where men could write, and little encouragement to write at all; no one was sure even of the safety of his manuscript or the possibility of its being read. But we know enough to tell that this age was an age not merely of war and robbery, but of famine and pestilence. No effective sanitary organization had yet come into the world, and the migrations of the time must have destroyed whatever hygienic balance had been established. Attila's ravages in North Italy were checked by an outbreak of fever in 452. There was a great epidemic of bubonic plague towards the end of the reign of Justinian (565) which did much to weaken the defence of Italy against the Lombards. In 543 ten thousand people had died in one day in Constantinople. (Gibbon says "each day.") Plague was raging in Rome in 590. The seventh century was also a plague-stricken century. The Englishman Bede, one of the few writers of the time, records pestilences in England in 664, 672, 678, and 683, no less than four in twenty years! Gibbon couples the Justinian epidemic with the great comet of 531, and with the very frequent and serious earthquakes of that reign. "Many cities of the east were left vacant, and in several districts of Italy the harvest and the vintage withered on the ground." He alleges "a visible decrease of the human species which has never been made good in some of the fairest countries of the globe." To many in those dark days it

seemed that all learning and all that made life seemly and desirable was perishing.<sup>1</sup>

How far the common lot was unhappier under these conditions of squalor and insecurity than it had been under the grinding order of the imperial system it is impossible to say. There was possibly much local variation, the rule of violent bullies here and a good-tempered freedom there, famine this year and plenty the next. If robbers abounded, tax-gatherers and creditors had disappeared. Such kings as those of the Frankish and Gothic kingdoms were really phantom rulers to most of their so-called subjects; the life of each district went on at a low level, with little trade or travel. Greater or lesser areas of country-side would be dominated by some able person, claiming with more or less justice the title of lord or count or duke from the tradition of the later empire or from the king. Such local nobles would assemble bands of retainers and build themselves strongholds. Often they adapted pre-existing buildings. The Colosseum at Rome, for example, the arena of many great gladiatorial shows, was converted into a fortress, and so was the amphitheatre at Arles. So also was the great tomb of Hadrian at Rome. In the decaying and now insanitary towns and cities shrunken bodies of artisans would hold together and serve the needs of the cultivating villages about them by their industry, placing themselves under the protection of some adjacent noble.

#### § 10

A very important share in the social recrystallization that went on in the sixth and seventh centuries after the breakdown and fusion of the fourth and fifth was taken by the Christian monastic orders that were now arising in the Western world.

Monasteries had existed in the world before Christianity. During the period of social unhappiness among the Jews before the time of Jesus of Nazareth, there was a sect of Essenes who lived apart in communities vowed to austere lives of solitude, purity, and self-denial.

<sup>1</sup> A very interesting and suggestive book bearing on this question of disease in relation to political history is *Malaria: a Neglected Factor in the History of Greece and Rome*, by W. H. S. Jones.

The Salvation of Learning by Christianity.





Photo: Alinari.

THE PRESENT-DAY MONASTERY OF MONTE CASSINO, ON THE SITE OF ST. BENEDICT'S ORIGINAL FOUNDATION.

Buddhism, too, had developed its communities of men who withdrew from the general effort and commerce of the world to lead lives of austerity and contemplation. Indeed, the story of Buddha, as we have told it, shows that such ideas must have prevailed in India long before his time, and that at last he repudiated them. Quite early in the history of Christianity there arose a similar movement away from the competition and heat and stress of the daily life of men. In Egypt, particularly, great numbers of men and women went out into the desert and there lived solitary lives of prayer and contemplation, living in absolute poverty in caves or under rocks, and subsisting on the chance alms of those whom their holiness impressed. Such lives would signify little to the historian, they are indeed of their very nature lives withdrawn from history, were it not for the turn this monastic tendency presently took among the more energetic and practical Europeans.

One of the central figures in the story of the development of monasticism in Europe is Saint Benedict, who lived between 480 and 544. He was born at Spoleto in Italy, and he was a young man of good family and ability. The shadow of the times fell upon him, and, like Buddha, he took to the religious life and at first set no limit to his austerities. Fifty miles from Rome is Subiaco, and there at the end of a gorge of the Anio, beneath a jungle growth of weeds and bushes, rose a deserted palace built by the Emperor Nero, overlooking an artificial lake that had been made in those days of de-

parted prosperity by damming back the waters of the river. Here, with a hair shirt as his chief possession, Benedict took up his quarters in a cave in the high southward-looking cliff that overhangs the stream, in so inaccessible a position that his food had to be lowered to him on a cord by a faithful admirer.<sup>1</sup> Three years he lived here, and his fame spread as Buddha's did nearly a thousand years before under similar circumstances.

As in the case of Buddha, the story of Benedict has been overlaid by foolish and credulous disciples with a mass of silly stories of miracles and manifestations. But presently we find him, no longer engaged in self-torment, but controlling a group of twelve monasteries, and the resort of a great number of people. Youths are brought to him to be educated, and the whole character of his life has changed.

From Subiaco he removed further southward to Monte Cassino, half-way between Rome and Naples, a lonely and beautiful mountain, in the midst of a great circle of majestic heights. Here, it is interesting to note that in the sixth century A.D. he found a temple of Apollo and a sacred grove and the country-side still worshipping at this shrine. His first labours had to be missionary labours, and it was with difficulty that he persuaded the simple pagans to demolish their temple and cut down their grove. The establishment upon Monte Cassino became a famous and powerful centre within the lifetime of its founder. Mixed up with the imbecile inventions of marvel-loving monks about

<sup>1</sup> Baring Gould's *Lives of the Saints*.



demons exorcised, disciples walking on the water, and dead children restored to life, we can still detect something of the real spirit of Benedict. Particularly significant are the stories that represent him as discouraging extreme mortification. He sent a damping message to a solitary who had invented a new degree in saintliness by chaining himself to a rock in a narrow cave. "Break thy chain," said Benedict, "for the true servant of God is chained not to rocks by iron, but to righteousness by Christ."

And next to the discouragement of solitary self-torture it is Benedict's distinction that he insisted upon hard work. Through the legends shines the clear indication of the trouble made by his patrician students and disciples who found themselves obliged to toil instead of leading lives of leisurely austerity under the ministrations of the lower-class brethren. A third remarkable thing about Benedict was his political influence. He set himself to reconcile Goths and Italians, and it is clear that Totila, his Gothic king, came to him for counsel and was greatly influenced by him. When Totila retook Naples from the Greeks, the Goths pro-

tected the women from insult and treated even the captured soldiers with humanity. When Belisarius, Justinian's general, had taken the same place ten years previously, he had celebrated his triumph by a general massacre.

Now the monastic organization of Benedict was a very great beginning in the western world.<sup>1</sup> One of his prominent followers was Pope Gregory the Great (540-604), the first monk to become Pope (590); he was one of the most capable and energetic of the popes, sending successful missions to the unconverted, and particularly to the Anglo-Saxons. He ruled in Rome like an independent king, organizing armies, making treaties. It is clear that Augustine's *City of God* was a very real thing to him. To his influence is due the imposition of the Benedictine rule upon nearly the whole of Latin monasticism.

Closely associated with these two names in the development of a civilizing monasticism out of the merely egotistic mortifications of the early recluses is that of Cassiodorus (490-585). He was evidently much senior to Pope Gregory,

<sup>1</sup> On Benedictinism, see Dom. Berlière's *L'Ordre Monastique*.—E. B.

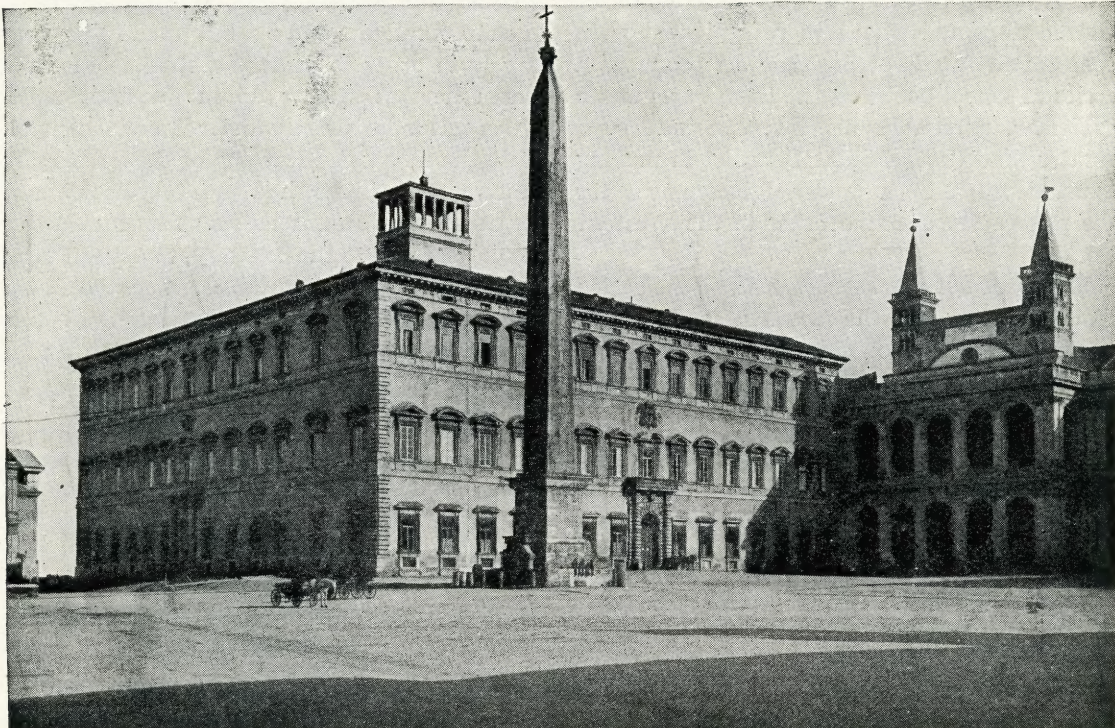


Photo: Anderson.

LATERAN PALACE, ROME—THE ORIGINAL PALACE OF THE POPES.



and younger by ten years than Benedict, and, like these two, he belonged to a patrician family, a Syrian family settled in Italy. He had a considerable official career under the Gothic kings; and when, between 545 and 553, the overthrow of those kings and the great pestilence paved the way for the new barbaric rule of the Lombards, he took refuge in a monastic career. He founded a monastery upon his private estates, and set the monks he gathered to work in quite the Benedictine fashion, though whether his monks actually followed the Benedictine rule that was being formulated about the same time from Monte Cassino we do not know. But there can be no question of his influence upon the development of this great working, teaching, and studying order. It is evident that he was profoundly impressed by the universal decay of education and the possible loss of all learning and of the ancient literature by the world; and from the first he directed his brethren to the task of preserving and restoring these things. He collected ancient MSS. and caused them to be copied. He made sundials, water clocks, and similar apparatus, a little last gleam of experimental science in the gathering ignorance. He wrote a history of the Gothic kings, and, what is more significant of his sense of the needs of the time, he produced a series of school books on the liberal arts and a grammar. Probably his influence was even greater than that of Saint Benedict in making monasticism into a powerful instrument for the restoration of social order in the Western world.

The spread of monasteries of the Benedictine order or type in the seventh and eighth centuries was very considerable. Everywhere we find them as centres of light, restoring,

maintaining, and raising the standard of cultivation, preserving some sort of elementary education, spreading useful arts, multiplying and storing books, and keeping before the eyes of the world the spectacle and example of a social backbone. For eight centuries thenceforth the European monastic system remained a system of patches and fibres of enlightenment in what might otherwise have been a wholly chaotic world. Closely associated with the Benedictine monasteries were the schools that grew presently into the medieval universities. The schools of the Roman world had been altogether swept away in the general social breakdown. There was a time when very few priests in Britain or Gaul could read the gospel or their service books. Only gradually was teaching restored to the world. But when it was restored, it came back not as the duty work of a learned slave, but as the religious service of a special class of devoted men.

In the east also there was a breach of educational continuity, but there the cause was not so much social disorder as religious intolerance, and the break was by no means so complete. Justinian closed and dispersed the schools of Athens (529), whose origins we have described in chap. xxiii, §§ 1 and 2; but he did this very largely in order to destroy a rival to the new school he was setting up in Constantinople, which was more directly under imperial control. Since the new Latin learning of the developing western universities had no text-books and literature of its own, it had, in spite of its strong theological bias to the contrary, to depend very largely upon the Latin classics and the Latin translations of the Greek literature. It was obliged to preserve far more of that splendid literature than it had a mind to do.



# A CENTURY OF HISTORY

## THE STORY OF A GREAT DISCOVERY

### VII

THE latter half of the eighteenth century was marked by a great wave of chemical research, and the consequent discovery of many highly imported substances and gases. Especially prominent among the inventions to be attributed to this period were those of carbonic acid gas, the result of experiments by Dr. Joseph Black, in 1754, and oxygen, of which the credit belongs to Dr. Priestly, though the year that saw the successful conclusion of his investigations, 1774, was the approximate date of the same discovery on independent lines by Scheele. Seven years later Henry Cavendish began his epoch-making experiments on the nature of hydrogen, proving that the sole product of its combustion was water. In 1781 the results of experiments on the distillation of coal were issued to the public by the Rev. Dr. Watson, who afterwards rose to the Episcopal Bench as Bishop of Llandaff. Dr. Watson's purpose was to discover the quantity of liquid, or tar, that was yielded by various substances in the process of distillation. In his paper the reverend scientist remarked, under the heading "Loss of Weight," "the matter which is lost during the distillation of both wood and pit-coal has been called *air*, and it certainly has one, at least, of the most distinguishing properties of *air*—*permanent elasticity*, for bladders may be inflated with it as with common air. It does not begin to be separated from either wood or coal till the lighter of the two oils begins to appear; it then rushes out with great violence, and unless a proper vent be given to it, the strongest vessels will be burst by it." But, though he collected some of this "air" in bladders, and even burnt it, he did not realise the prospects which lay before his eyes. Instead, he merely threw out the speculation that this "*Inflammable air*," considered in this view, bears a great resemblance to what the chemists have hitherto understood by their phlogiston or food of fire."

At about the same period Lavoisier's researches into aeriform substances yielded him the honour of being the first to make "water" gas. He was also the inventor of the gasometer. A word, too, must be given to the tar-making patent of the famous Admiral Cochrane, Earl of Dundonald. The date of the patent was 1781, and the process was carried on at Culross Abbey, the family seat of the Cochranes. It was described as "the extracting of tar, pitch, essential oils, volatile alkalies, mineral acids, and salts, and the making of cinders from pit-coal." In the manufacture of the tar and other products, the most important product of all, coal gas, was naturally evolved, and was even carried up to the Abbey in a vessel resembling a large tea-urn, and there employed to illuminate the hall on occasions when Lord Dundonald was entertaining company. But, any idea beyond that of mere idle display was not present to the mind of his lordship or of anyone else, any more than it was to the mind of Dr. Watson, and it was reserved for another Scot to carry out the epoch-making discovery of coal gas as an illuminant, and also to put it to the great purpose of serving the needs of the public.

This was William Murdoch, or Murdock, as the name was sometimes spelt. He was born on August 21, 1754, at

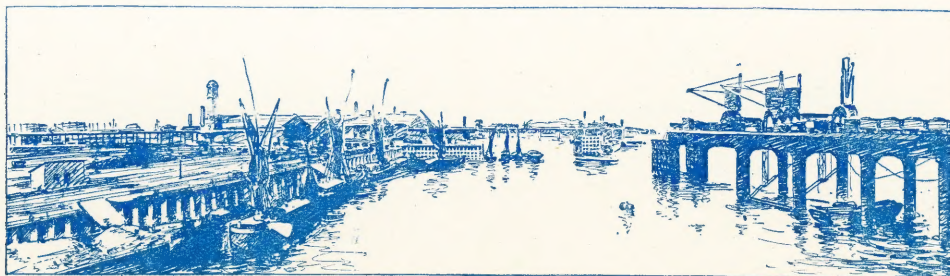
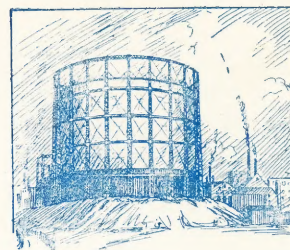
Bello Mill, situated in the village of Lugar and the Parish of Auchinleck, Ayrshire. Auchinleck was the estate of James Boswell, the well-known friend and biographer of Dr. Johnson. Murdoch's father was not only the tenant of the Boswell family in respect of the mill, but also of a small farm, and that the inventor of gas was the possessor of hereditary gifts is made clear by the fact that his father was the discoverer of toothed bevelled mill-gearing, the first working specimen of which was in after years to be seen on the lawn in front of William Murdoch's house at Handsworth, near Birmingham.

Murdoch's early years were characteristic of those strenuous times. The youngster, according to local tradition, spent his days herding his father's cows along the banks of the Bello streamlet. According to Smiles, in his "Men of Invention and Industry," published in 1884, "the spot is still pointed out where the boy, in the intervals of his herding, hewed a square compartment out of the rock at the waterside, and there burnt the splint coal found on the top of the Black Band ironstone. . . . This little cavern was provided with a fireplace and vent all complete. It is possible that he may there have derived from his experiments the first idea of gas as an illuminant." Thus the excellent Samuel Smiles, ever on the look out for signs of precocity among his industrial heroes. But, alas! cold truth compels a doubt, not only as to the anticipation of the discovery made years afterwards in Cornwall, but even as to the extent of the work spent by the boy in hollowing out the cavern. Again, according to local tradition, the cave was a natural formation, though it was enlarged by Murdoch. He even constructed a rough fireplace inside it, the flue being carried through the garden above and connected with the kitchen chimney of the paternal cottage. Probably, nay certainly, the lad, aided and accompanied by his friends, burnt the splint coal in this fireplace, but it would be absurd to imagine that he was actuated by any more serious purpose than that of a clever boy who, like all boys of his kind, took pride in fitting up a house which he could call his own, and which further possessed a real coal fire and a chimney.

William Murdoch's inventive faculties were first turned in other, more immediately practical, directions than that of the discovery with which his name will always be associated. With the help of his father he constructed a wooden horse—a forerunner of the modern bicycle—on which he used to ride into the neighbouring village of Cummock, much to the astonishment of the natives. Evidence of the all-round character of the training given to the lad is contained in the fact that a stone bridge across the Nith, near Dumfries, is attributed to him, though for so young a man as he was at the time his share in the work may be subject to controversy.

But, like so many young Scots, both of that period and the present day, Murdoch felt the call of the South in his blood, and in his twenty-third year he turned his steps towards England. His career in that country will form the subject of the next chapter.

(To be continued)





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